

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 214
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 11192

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: IS EG XF
SUBJ: ISRAELI REACTION TO THE ISMAILIA SUMMIT

REF.: CAIRO 23006

SUMMARY: THE GENERAL FEELING IN ISRAEL IS THAT BEGIN OFFERED
MMEANINGFUL CONCESSIONS IN HIS ISMAILIA MEETING AND THAT THOSE
CONCESSIONS NOW REQUIRE A RESPONSE FROM EGYPT. TOGETHER WITH
THE FEELING THAT EGYPT HAS NOT APPRECIATED BEGIN'S CONCESSIONS,
THERE IS A GROWING AWARENESS THAT PEACE AN OPPORTUNITY FACES
THE TWO COUNTRIES WHICH MUST NOT BE LOST. MANY ISRAELIS NOW
FEEL THEY WERE TOO OPTIMISTIC AFTER THE SADAT VISIT TO JERU-
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SALEM THAT THEY HOPED FOR TOO MUCH TOO SOON AND THAT A RETURN
TO NORMALCY IS PROABABLY A GOOD THING. THE FUTURE OF THE TERRI-
TORIES REMAINS THE CRUX OF THE MATTER. HERE THE ISRAELIS ARE
DIVIDED, WITH SOME CONSIDERING THAT THE AUTONOMOUS TERRITORY
SHOULD BE LINKED TO JORDAN IN ORDER TO AVOID AN INDEPENDENT
PALESTINIAN STATE AND OTHERS ARGUING THAT SUCH A LINK WOULD
AMOUNT TO FOREIGN SOVEREIGNTY. END SUMMARY

THE VIEWS OF PARLIAMENTARIANS REGARDING THE RESULTS OF THE MEETING AT ISMAILIA BETWEEN BEGIN AND SADAT WILL BE BETTER KNOWN AFTER THE KNESSET DEBATE TODAY. THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE REACTION OF SOME OTHER SEGMENTS OF THE GENERAL ISRAELI PUBLIC TO ISMAILIA AND TO THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY REGARDING PEACE NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT.

WE SENSE A STRONG FEELING THAT ISRAELIS ARE CONVINCED BEGIN HAS OFFERED CONCESSIONS WHICH SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO RESPOND TO SADAT'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM. OUR QUICK SURVEY INDICATES PEOPLE ARE CONVINCED THESE ARE GENUINE CONCESSIONS WHICH WERE DIFFICULT FOR BEGIN TO OFFER AND ARE NOT JUST TACTICAL MOVES. THERE IS DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THESE CONCESSIONS ARE NOT APPRECIATED AS SUCH BY THE EGYPTIANS. THERE IS ALSO A CONVICTION (PROBABLY HELD BY MOST ISRAELIS) THAT EGYPT MUST NOW DO MORE AND MUST TAKE THE NEXT STEP. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THE POLITICAL PERSUASION OF THOSE COMMENTING ON THIS SUBJECT: THOSE OF THE RIGHT SAY THE CONCESSIONS WERE NECESSARY IN ORDER TO RESPOND TO SADAT: THOSE OF THE LEFT SAY CONCESSIONS WERE NECESSARY, BUT WERE MADE TOO EARLY IN THE NEGOTIATIONS. BDST PERSONIFYING THE VIEWS OF THE LATER GROUP WERE THE REMARKS OF FORMER LABOR PARTY MINISTER SHLOMO HILLEL WHO AID, "THIS WAS NOT JUST A SALE, IT WAS A LIQUIDATION."

THERE IS ALSO A GROWING REALIZATION THAT PEACE WILL NOT BE
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PAINLESS, OR EASY, OR CHEAP. THE POST-SADAT-TO-JERUSALEM EUPHORIA IS RAPIDLY EVAPORATING. ISRAELIS ARE MORE AWARE THAT THE ARABS WILL NOT BE ACCOMMODATING AND THAT THE DECISIONS WHICH FACE BOTH SIDES IN THE WEEKS AHEAD WILL NOT BE EASY. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE IS A CERTAIN IMPATIENCE -- IN PART PROBABLY OCCASIONED BY BEGIN'S OPTIMISM BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR ISMAILIA -- THAT WILL PROBABLY LEAD MANY ISRAELIS TO ASK "WHEN WILL WE KNOW THE OUTCOME OF THE NEGOTIATIONS?" THIS IMPATIENCE HAS BEEN FED BY THE AWARENESS OF THE KNESSETS' DISATISFACTION WITH BEGIN'S HANDLING OF THE PLAN.

AS THEY CONSIDER THE FUTURE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, MAY ISRAELIS ARE BEGINNING TO ASK HOW JORDAN CAN BE BROUGHT INTO THE TALKS. THEY SEE THIS STEP AS NECESSARY FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. AS ONE HISTADRUT OFFICIAL PUT IT, A WAY MUST BE FOUND TO BRING IN THE JORDANIANS TO SOLVE THIS AWKWARD PROBLEM. PROFESSOR MAOZ OF HEBREW UNIVERSITY NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT BEGIN'S PLAN DOES NOT MAKE IT ATTRACTIVE TO JORDAN TO JOIN -- THE PLAN OFFERS JORDAN ONLY THE POSSIBILITY OF A RIGHT FOR RESIDENTS OF THE TERRITORIES TO VOTE.

HOWEVER, WHEN ISRAELIS CONTEMPLATE THE FUTURE OF THE TALKS,

MOST REFUSE TO ACCEPT THERE MIGHT BE FAILURE; THE PREVAILING ASSESSMENT IS THAT THE PROCESS HAS GONE TOO FAR TO BE REVERSED. THIS IS EXPRESSED BY MEMBERS OF THE ISRAELI DELEGATION WHO RETURNED FROM CAIRO, INCLUDING BEN-ELISSAR, WHO HAVE COMMENTED THERE IS NO GOING BACK. HE TOLD US HE BELIEVED THE DESIRE OF THE EGYPTIAN PEOPLE FOR PEACE WAS GENUINE AND THAT THE PRESENCE OF THE ISRAELI DELEGATION IN CAIRO SERVED TO UNDERSCORE THIS NATIONAL DESIRE.

LIKE THE EGYPTIANS (PARA THREE REFTTEL), ISRAELIS BELIEVE NOW THEY WERE TOO OPTIMISTIC AND EXPECTED TOO MUCH TOO SOON. THE REALIZATION THAT THE TIME HAS NOW COME FOR HARD DECISIONS IS WELCOMED IN MANY QUARTERS. FOR EXAMPLE, WEIZMAN TOLD A LIKUD MEETING YESTERDAY (DECEMBER 27) THAT HE AND HIS MINIS-CONFIDENTIAL

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TERIAL COLLEAGUES WERE PLEASED WITH THE "RETURN TO NORMALCY"

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AND CALLED ON ISRAELIS TO KEEP THEIR COOL FOR THE NEGOTIATIONS AHEAD. A JOURNALIST TOLD US TODAY THAT HE FELT BEGIN HAD BEEN CARRIED AWAY IN THE TALKS WITH SADAT AND OVERWHELMED BY THE DESIRE TO BE RESPONSIVE TO HIM. PROFESSOR MAOZ SAID THE NEGOTIATIONS HAVE NOW PROCEEDED TO THE "NUTS AND BOLTS" STAGE AND NOTED THAT DAYAN IS DEFINITELY IN THE PROCESS, WHICH IS A GOOD THING BECAUSE OF THE FAVORABLE INFLUENCE HE HAS ON BEGIN.

ISRAELIS ALSO REMAIN CONVINCED THAT THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK IS THE NUB OF THE PROBLEM. NOTHING HAS HAPPENED TO SHAKE THEIR CONVICTION THAT ISRAEL'S SECURITY NEEDS RULE OUT AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE. MOST PEOPLE WE HAVE TALKED

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WITH ARE CONCERNED THAT SELF RULE MIGHT LEAD TO INDEPENDENCE. A FEW DO NOT FEAR THAT; MAOZ SAID THAT BEGIN WILL ENSURE THAT AUTONOMY DOES NOT LEAD TO INDEPENDENCE, BUT OTHERS ARE NOT SO SURE. MOST LABOR LEADERS WE HAVE CONTACTED ARE CONCERNED THAT AN AUTONOMOUS WEST BANK WOULD MEAN AN INDEPENDENT STATE AND, AS AVRAHAM ALON OF THE HISTADRUT INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT SAID, AN ASSURANCE THAT ISRAEL WILL REVIEW THE QUESTION OF SOVEREIGNTY IN FIVE YEARS IS NOT REASSURING.

IN LOOKING TO THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK, THE RIGHT WING SAYS THERE SHOULD BE NO LINK WITH JORDAN BECAUSE THAT WOULD MEAN THE LOSS OF ISRAELI SOVEREIGNTY. THE LEFT SAYS THERE MUST BE EITHER A LINK WITH JORDAN OR AN INDEPENDENT STATE WILL RESULT; PERES SAID IN THE KNESSET DEBATE TODAY THAT HUSSEIN COULD BE COUNTED ON TO DO A GOOD JOB IN KEEPING OUT THE PLO. YA'AKOV TZUR OF THE LABOR PARTY-AFFILIATED KIBBUTZ MOVEMENT ALSO STRESSED TO US THE NEED FOR A LINK TO JORDAN OF THE AUTONOMOUS WEST BANK AS THE ONLY WAY TO AVOID AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE; "IT WOULD BE DISASTROUS WITHOUT SUCH A LINK." MK AMNON RUBENSTEIN SUMMED UP THE FEELINGS OF MANY ISRAELIS WHEN HE SAID HE WOULD SUPPORT THE BEGIN PLAN FOR THE WEST BANK AND GAZA BECAUSE IT PRESENTED THE BEST PATH BETWEEN CONTINUED ISRAELI SOVEREIGNTY, WHICH HE OPPOSED, AND A RETURN OF THE TERRITORIES TO JORDANIAN SOVEREIGNTY, WHICH OTHERS OPPOSED.

THE FUTURE OF THE TERRITORIES IS, OF COURSE, COMPLICATED BY THE PRESENCE OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS. THERE IS A CONVICTION THAT THE INTERESTS OF SETTLERS WHO HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED TO SETTLE BY PREVIOUS GOVERNMENTS MUST BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION BY THIS GOVERNMENT. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE IS AN

AWARENESS (AND WE ARE FRANK TO ADMIT WE DO NOT KNOW HOW DEEP
THIS MAY RUN) THAT PROTESTS BY THESE SETTLERS COULD ENDANGER
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THE PEACE PROCESS. IN ADDITION, THE PROBLEMS OF PROTECTING
JEWISH SETTLEMENTS IN AREAS UNDER AUTONOMOUS ARAB RULE IS AN
ISSUE BEING INCREASINGLY DISCUSSED.

THERE IS AS YET NO CLEAR VIEW FROM MILITARY OFFICERS WITH
WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN. THERE APPEAR TO BE TWO GENERAL CAMPS --
THOSE WHO ARE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT PEACE AND THE NEGOTIATIONS
AND THOSE WHO REMAIN PESSIMISTIC. THE CHIEF OF STAFF HAS
MADE NO SECRET OF HIS OPPOSITION, ALTHOUGH HE HAS NOT
PUBLICLY AIRED HIS POSITION. WE KNOW HE IS NOT ALONE IN HIS
VIEWS AND WILL BE SENDING MORE ON TTHIS VIA SEPTTEL TOMORROW.

COMMENT: THE KNESSET DEBATE TODAY WILL SERVE TO FOCUS ATTEN-
TION ON CRITICISMS OF THE ISMAILIA TELKS AND BEGIN'S
HANDLING OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONSTO DATE. AS THE DEBATE
SPILLS OVER INTO THE NATIONAL SCENE OPINIONS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY
BECOME INCREASINGLY POLARIZED. FOR THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, THE
PUBLIC CONTINUES TO GIVE SOLID SUPPORT TO THE PRIME MINISTER
IN HIS MOVES. LEWIS

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